



Hong Kong Happenings

"This is amazing. Why even leave the airport? Everything we need is right here," Bryce said, grinning, as he spun around admiring his surroundings.

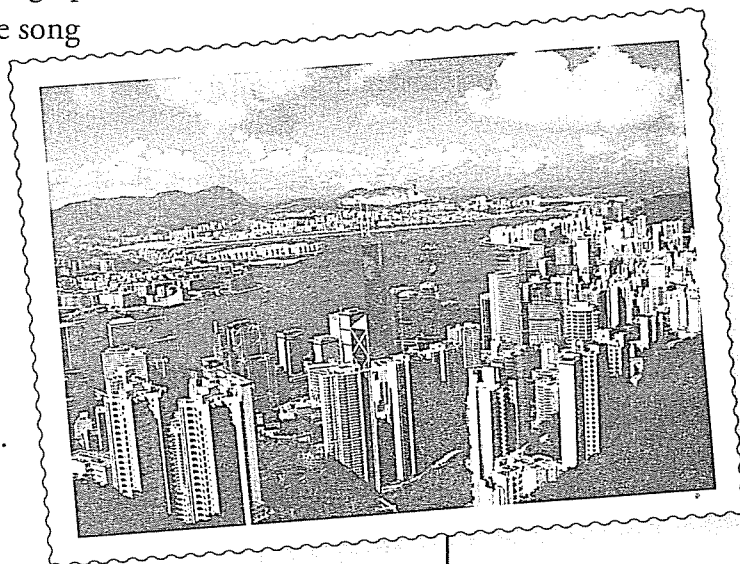
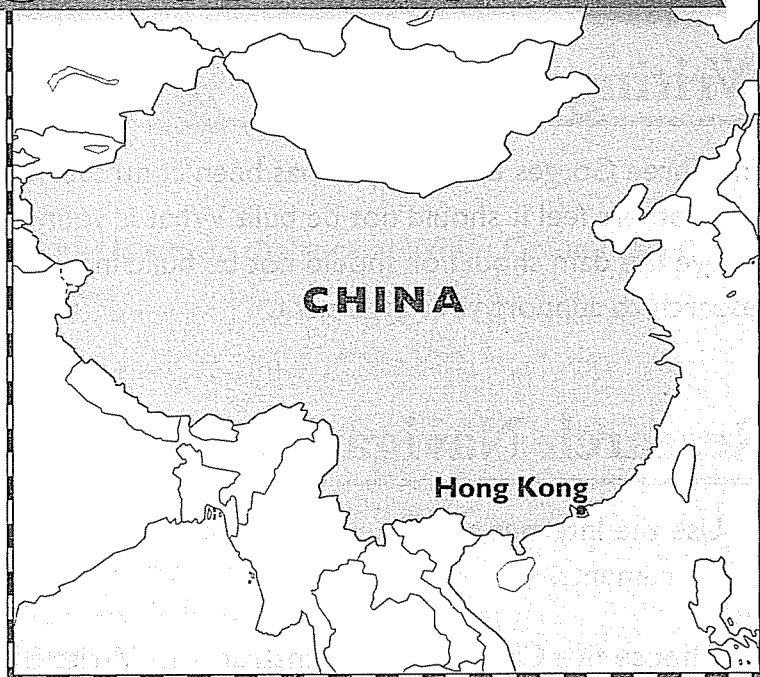
Along with the usual shops and restaurants one might expect to find at a large airport, the Hong Kong International Airport offers beauty salons, chair massage, showers, napping rooms, plasma TVs, a kids' play area, Internet access, a customer service center, photo booths (for passport photos or photo stickers), a post office, and a prayer room.

"I'm thinking it might be worthwhile to see the rest of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region while we're here," Avaron replied. "Besides, I don't see any karaoke places. That's one thing we have to experience."

Bryce frowned. He wasn't thrilled about standing up in front of a roomful of strangers and singing along while the words of the song were shown on a screen. He secretly hoped they would not be able to fit this into their busy schedule.

After gathering their luggage, they caught a bus to Victoria Harbor. There they boarded the Star Ferry for a ride across the water. Victoria Harbor lies between a part of Hong Kong called Kowloon Peninsula, which sticks out into the water from the mainland, and Hong Kong Island. Hong Kong also includes over 230 outlying islands. There are no bridges crossing the harbor, but there are three tunnels that run under it. The harbor is lined with skyscrapers, and mountains rise upward behind them.

After crossing the harbor, Bryce and Avaron rode the tram to the top of Victoria Peak. The ride on the cable car ride takes only seven minutes. The highest peak on Hong Kong Island affords spectacular views of the harbor below. After enjoying their bird's-eye view of the region, the kids hiked into the forest full of bamboo, pine trees, and ferns.



Hong Kong is a city filled with skyscrapers.

"Hong Kong is such an amazing mixture of Eastern and Western culture," Avaron said.

"Yeah, it was ruled by the British for about 150 years. They recognized the value of the deep and sheltered harbor. They knew they could use the protected body of water for shipping. In 1898, the British and Chinese signed a 99-year lease that gave the British control of the area until 1997. At that time, Hong Kong was returned to Chinese control," Bryce noted.

While on Hong Kong Island, the kids visited the Man Mo Temple, one of the oldest in the city. While it is a Taoist temple, it is also popular with Buddhists. Large cone-shaped coils of incense hang from the ceiling, adding their aroma and smoke to the peaceful setting.

"I can't remember what the Taoists believe; can you?" Avaron asked.

"Well, Tao (pronounced *dow*) can't really be defined. It has to be experienced," Bryce answered.

Avaron looked at him with her eyebrows raised and her hands on her hips.

"But if I were going to try to explain it, I'd start by saying that it was founded by Lao-Tse, who lived at the same time as Confucius. Tao means 'the path' or 'the way.' It refers to the energy that flows through and around all things. It emphasizes freedom and a simple life, among other things."

"Maybe I should just read a book about it," Avaron commented.

"No, let me try to explain. Taoism has influenced Chinese thought for 2,000 years. Taoists believe in harmony, which is shown by the yin and yang symbol. Yin represents dark, and yang represents light. Yin and yang symbolize the interaction between all sets of opposites in the universe. Taoists believe in restoring harmony in the individual body and in the universe as a whole. The goal of Taoists is to, well, to become one with the Tao."

"That's pretty confusing," Avaron noted.

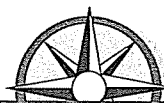
"Yeah, it is. Maybe you *should* read a book. You could start with the *Tao-te Ching*, the classic book by Lao-Tse."

The kids returned to the peninsula in the early afternoon. They marveled as a crush of office workers scurried out of their offices to get lunch.

"It looks like every single person on the street is talking on a mobile phone," Avaron noted.

"I read that eight out of ten residents in Hong Kong own a cellphone," said Bryce.

"This is also one of the most densely populated areas in the world. People live very close together in Hong Kong," said Avaron.



Confucius

551–479 B.C.

Confucius was a famous teacher and philosopher. He established the art of teaching as both a job and a way of life. His beliefs and lessons came to be known as Confucianism. He taught people to try to live an honest life. He spoke about goodness instead of God. His teachings, which provided a system of moral conduct, strongly affected Chinese culture and history.

"And it has some of the busiest traffic in the world," Bryce added.

"Well, let's hope we can get through this crazy traffic in time to do our dolphin-watching tour," Avaron said, elbowing her way onto a crowded bus.

The kids arrived in time to board the boat for their tour. They saw numerous dolphins, all of which were pink. Although it is not known for sure, some scientists believe the dolphins are actually white, but they become pink when they blush. Exercise makes them blush, which helps remove excess heat from their bodies. The kids learned that the mammals are found from South Africa to China and northern Australia.

"They look like they're having so much fun," Bryce mused.

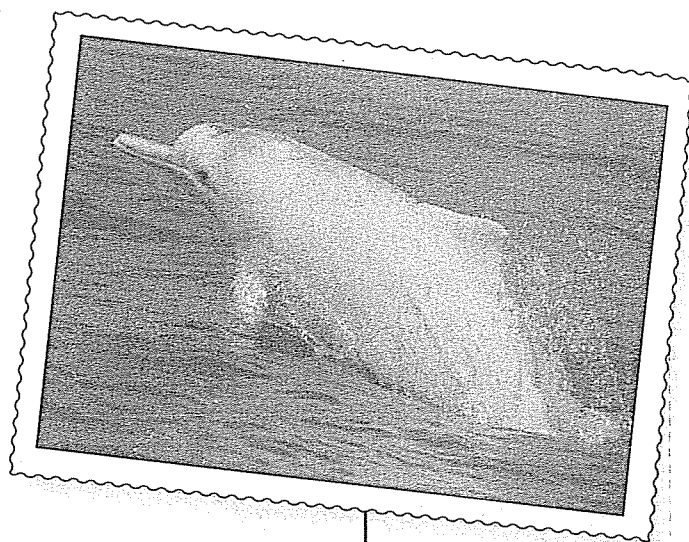
"I know. It's a shame they have so many things threatening them," Avaron responded. Their guide had explained that the pink dolphins are endangered by habitat loss, boat traffic, pollution, and over-fishing.

After the tour ended, the kids decided to explore some of the city's narrow alleys. They passed a table where four people sat playing mahjong. This popular game, played with tiles, is similar to the card game gin rummy. Several people walked along the sidewalks with a pole over one shoulder. On either end of the pole were baskets filled with a variety of goods being carried to and from the markets. The kids passed stalls where incense burned and fortune-tellers waited for clients. They passed stalls where letter writers filled in application forms and tax returns, as well as offering Chinese calligraphy, the art of decorative writing. Suddenly they found themselves on the traffic-filled streets again, surrounded by massive skyscrapers.

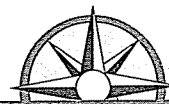
"Hey, let's get some dim sum. I'm starving," said Bryce.

Dim sum is a variety of small Chinese dishes, including such items as dumplings, egg rolls, steamed dishes, and various pastries. Instead of ordering from a menu, people choose what they want from a cart that is rolled past customers' tables. After enjoying a satisfying meal, the two returned to their room for some much-needed sleep.

Their first outing the following day was to Ocean Park, a tremendous theme park with roller coasters, Ferris wheels, and other rides. Also located at the park is the world's largest reef aquarium, home to thousands of sea creatures. Bryce and Avaron walked through a tunnel that passed by a large shark aquarium. Then they watched the two pandas in the Giant Panda Habitat.



A pink dolphin plays near boats on a Hong Kong Dolphinwatch trip.



Protecting the Panda

The giant pandas' natural habitat in China has decreased by 50 percent over the last 20 years. Giant Panda Nature Reserves have been established to provide protected habitats to save the animals.

The kids proceeded to Aberdeen Harbor, where many people live on narrow boats called junks and sampans. This traditional fishing community is surrounded by hillsides covered with large skyscrapers.

"I think it's time to eat," Bryce commented.

"You always think that," Avaron said. "But this is a good place to eat. Let's go to one of the floating restaurants."

The kids picked one of the three floating restaurants in the harbor, and then boarded a small boat to get to it.

"Let's try some *she gang*," Bryce said.

"What is it?" Avaron asked suspiciously.

"Well, uh, it's snake soup," Bryce replied.

"You go right ahead. I'm going to order fresh seafood instead," said Avaron.

Avaron asked the waiter, "Are there any karaoke lounges nearby?"

"You mean a singing room?" he asked.

"Um, yeah, I guess so," she replied.

The waiter told them how to get to a nearby "singing room," and the kids paid for their dinner, rode the ferry in, and followed his directions.

"I really don't want to get up in front of a bunch of strangers and make a fool of myself," Bryce grumbled.

"Oh come on, just try it," said Avaron.

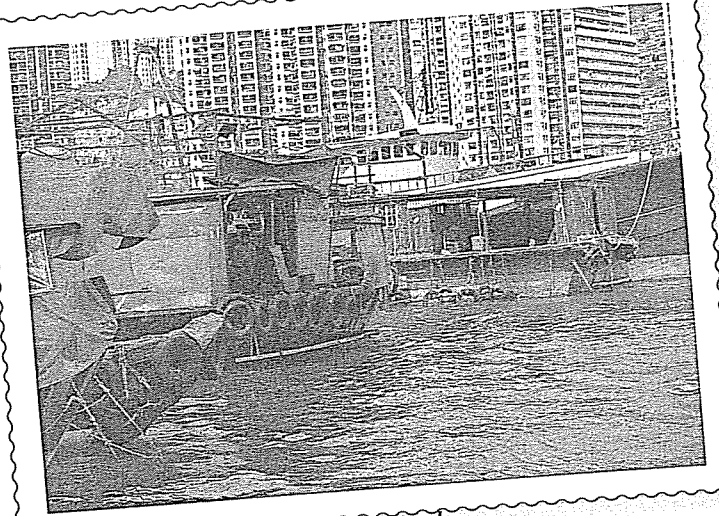
They entered a small building with a snack counter inside. Avaron asked about the singing rooms. The employee explained that they could pay a small fee and then enter a private room.

Bryce cocked his head. "You mean I don't have to sing in front of anybody else? Maybe this will be fun after all."

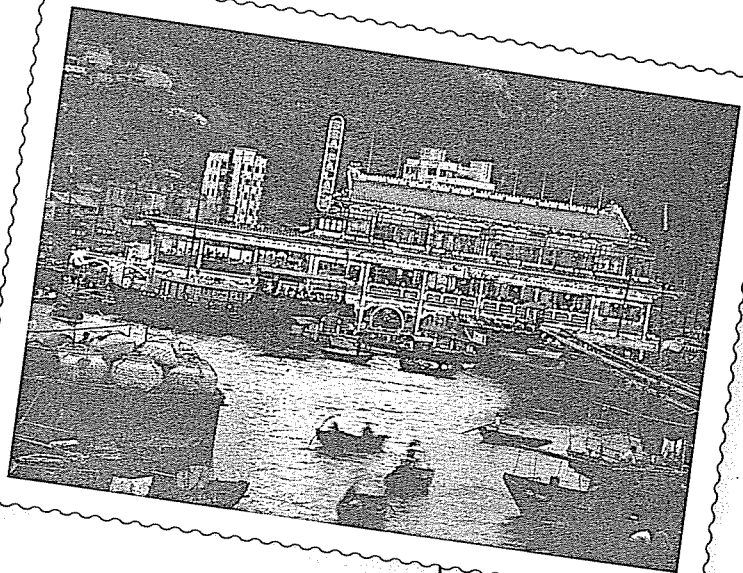
Hours later, after singing many songs, Avaron commented that it was funny to be in Asia and see so many American songs to choose from. "Just one more song," Bryce pleaded. "Let's do a duet."

"We tried that," said Avaron. "You sang so loud I couldn't hear myself think."

Bryce grinned at her until she relented. "Okay, one more song, Mr. Karaoke King. You're probably going to insist on singing in front of a crowd next time."



Junks and sampans
in Aberdeen
Harbor



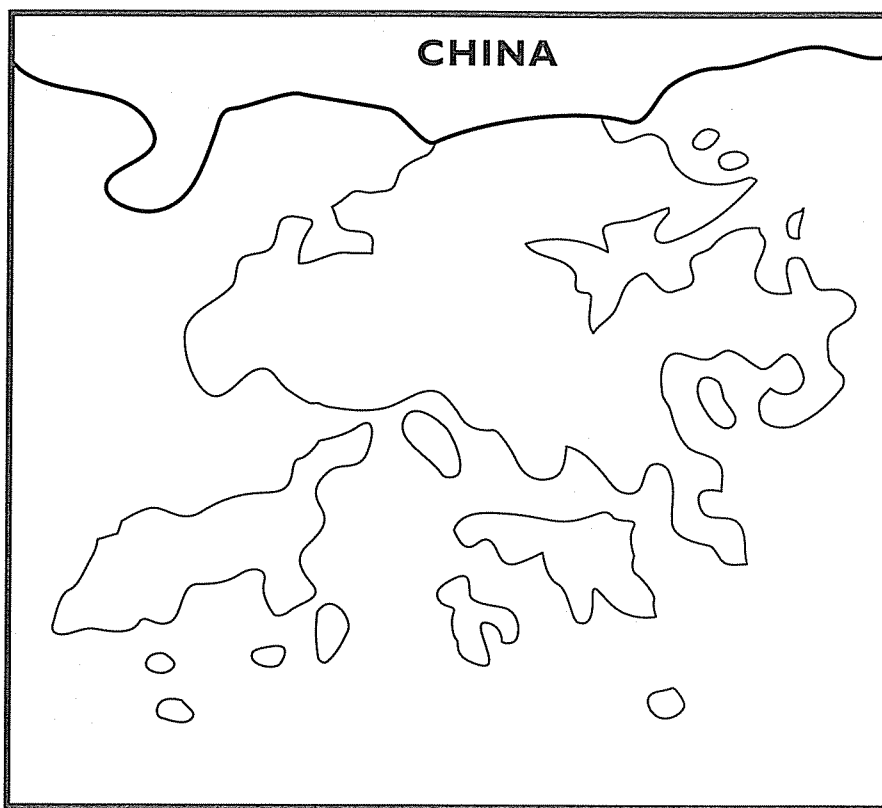
The Sea
Palace Restaurant
is one of the
floating restaurants
in Hong Kong.



Name _____

Date _____

Map Exploration



Use an atlas or Internet map site to complete the map of Hong Kong and answer the question.

1. Label Victoria Harbor on the map.
2. Label Hong Kong Island.
3. Shade Kowloon Peninsula.
4. Mark where the mountains are located.
5. The highly populated areas of Hong Kong are along the southern tip of the peninsula and the northern side of Hong Kong Island. Some of this population pattern was caused by geographic factors. What geographic factor do you think helped cause this population pattern?



Name _____

Date _____

Vocabulary Voyage

Use the words in the box and the clues to complete the puzzle.

calligraphy
karaoke

densely
mahjong

harbor
peninsula

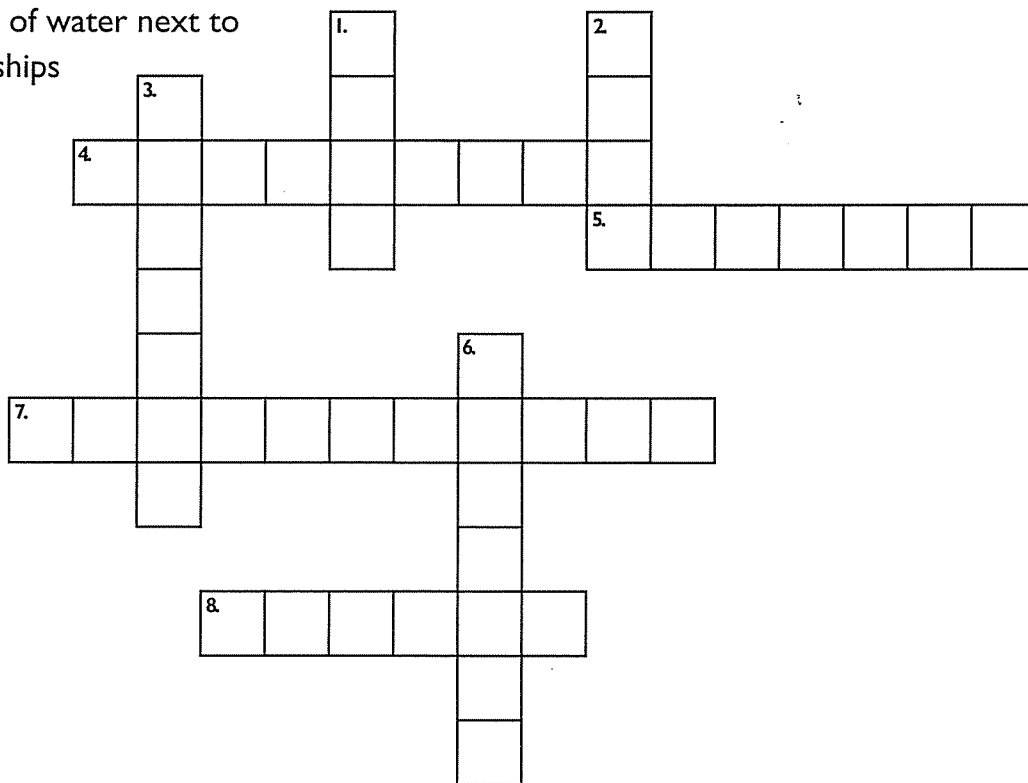
junk
tram

Down

1. a narrow Chinese boat with a flat bottom and square sails
2. a vehicle that moves people, like a streetcar or cable car
3. being close together
6. an activity where recorded music and words of songs are played so that people sing the songs themselves

Across

4. a piece of land that sticks out from a larger area of land into a body of water
5. a game played with tiles
7. beautiful handwriting done with a special pen or brush
8. a protected area of water next to a coast used by ships and boats





Name _____

Date _____

Comprehension Expedition



Darken the circle for the best answer.

1. Why did the British turn Hong Kong over to the Chinese in 1997?
 - (A) The Chinese controlled the harbor.
 - (B) The lease between the two countries ended.
 - (C) The people of Hong Kong voted for it.
 - (D) The government wanted to mix the cultures.
2. What do the Taoist yin and yang symbolize?
 - (A) Harmony
 - (B) Difficulty
 - (C) Suffering
 - (D) Goodness
3. How has progress in China affected the pink dolphins?
 - (A) Many of the dolphins have relocated to South Africa and Australia.
 - (B) The dolphin habitat is endangered by more boat traffic and more pollution.
 - (C) Chemicals in the polluted water caused the dolphins to turn pink.
 - (D) The dolphins had to be relocated to Ocean Park in a special habitat.

Use complete sentences to answer the question.

4. What could a visitor learn about Hong Kong culture by walking down the city's alleyways with Avaron and Bryce?
